

SUBSTANCE
OF
LORD GRENVILLE'S
SPEECH
ON THE
REVIVAL OF THE SLAVE TRADE.

STANDARD

OF

THE AMERICAN

RECORD

OF THE

RECORD OF THE AMERICAN

RECORD

THE AMERICAN

RECORD

SUBSTANCE

OF THE

S P E E C H

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LORD GRENVILLE,

IN THE

HOUSE OF LORDS,

ON MONDAY, JUNE 27, 1814,

IN MOVING FOR CERTAIN PAPERS RELATIVE TO THE

REVIVAL

OF THE

SLAVE TRADE.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JAMES RIDGWAY, 170, PICCADILLY.

1814.

SUBSTANCE

OF THE

SPEECH

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LORD GRENVILLE,

IN THE

HOUSE OF LORDS,

ON MONDAY, JUNE 27, 1814.

IN MOVING FOR CERTAIN PAPERS RELATIVE TO THE

REVIVAL

OF THE

SLAVE TRADE.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JAMES RIDGWAY, 170, PICCADILLY.

C. WOOD, Printer,
Doppin's Court, Fleet Street.

1814.

IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS,

JUNE 27, 1814.

THE order of the day having been read for summoning all the Lords, Lord Grenville desired that the unanimous Address of this House, of the 9th of May last, together with his Royal Highness the Prince Regent's most gracious Answer, should be read.

They were read accordingly, and are as follows; viz.

ADDRESS.

“ May it please your Royal Highness;

“ WE, his majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the lords spiritual and temporal, in parliament assembled, beg leave humbly to represent to your royal highness, that we have seen with unspeakable satisfaction the beneficial and happy consequences of the law, by which the African Slave Trade has been, throughout all his majesty's dominions, for ever prohibited and abolished; and that we rely with the fullest confidence on the gracious assurances which both his majesty and your royal highness have condescended to give to us, of your endeavours to obtain from other powers that co-operation which is still necessary for the completion of this great work.

“ It well became Great Britain, having partaken so largely in the guilt of this inhuman and unchristian traffic, to stand forward among the nations of Europe, and openly to proclaim its renunciation. This duty we have discharged;

but our obligations do not cease here. The crimes countenanced by our example, and the calamities created or extended by our misconduct, continue to afflict an unoffending people; other European nations still carry on this commerce, if commerce it can be called, in the lives and liberties of our fellow creatures; by their intervention its clandestine continuance is encouraged and facilitated in our own dependencies; by the same cause the desolation and barbarism of a whole continent are prolonged; and unless some timely prevention be applied, the returning tranquillity of Europe, the source of joy and exultation to ourselves, will be the æra only of renewed and aggravated miseries to the wretched victims of an unprincipled and relentless avarice.

“ With all humility therefore, but with the utmost earnestness, we supplicate your royal highness, that the whole weight and influence of the British crown may be exerted, in the approaching negociations, to avert this dreadful evil. In the name of our country, and on the behalf of the interests of humanity, we entreat that the immediate and total abolition of the Slave Trade may be solicited from all the sovereigns of Europe. No moment, we think, was ever yet so favourable for stipulating a joint and irrevocable renunciation of these barbarous practices, and for promulgating, by the assembled authority of the whole civilized world, a solemn declaration, that to carry away into Slavery the inhabitants of unoffending countries, is to violate the universal law of nations, founded as that law must ever be on the immutable principles of justice and religion.

“ It is on those sacred principles, the safeguards of all lawful government, the bulwarks of all national independence, that we wish our proposal to be rested. On them we rely for its success, recommended as it will be, not by the exhortations only, but by the example of Great Britain, and addressed to the rulers of those states which have themselves so signally been rescued by Providence from danger and destruction, from internal desolation, and from subjection to a foreign yoke. On all it must, we think, impress

itself with equal force; whether they be ranked among the deliverers or the delivered; among those whom a merciless oppression had already overwhelmed, or among those whose moderation and justice in success have added lustre even to the firmness of their resistance, and to the glory of their victories.

“No worthier thanks we confidently believe can be offered to Providence for past protection, on no better grounds can future blessings be solicited, than by the recognition and discharge of the great duties which we all owe alike to the rights, the liberty, and the happiness of our fellow creatures.”

A N S W E R.

“My Lords,

“I RECEIVE this Address with great satisfaction; and you may be assured, that I shall use my best endeavour to accomplish the object of it.”

After which Lord Grenville spoke to the following effect.

themselves with equal force; whether they be ranked among the
 deliverers or the delivered; among those whom a merciless
 oppression had already overwhelmed, or among those
 whose moderation and justice in success have added lustre
 even to the firmness of their resistance, and to the glory
 of their victories.

"No worthier thanks we confidently believe can be offered
 to Providence for past protection, or no better grounds can
 future blessings be solicited, than by the recognition and
 discharge of the great duties which we all owe alike to the
 rights, the liberty, and the happiness of our fellow
 creatures."

ANSWER.

"My Lords, I receive this Address with great satisfaction; and
 you may be assured, that I shall use my best endeavour to
 accomplish the object of it."

After which Lord Grenville spoke to the following
 effect.

S U B S T A N C E
OF THE
S P E E C H
OF
L O R D G R E N V I L L E,
&c. &c.

MY LORDS,

YOUR lordships will readily believe, judging of my feelings by your own, how deeply mortifying it must be to me again to bring under your discussion a subject which I vainly thought had been closed for ever ; how painful to the adversaries of the Slave Trade once more to find themselves suppliants in the cause which they had gained, soliciting your interposition to prevent the revival of that atrocious wickedness in the final abolition of which they had so long exulted. And yet it is from these very recollections that they now derive both consolation and confidence. Animated by the memory of past success, by the indelible impressions made upon the public mind, and by your own irrevocable determination, they come before you now afflicted indeed but not

depressed, dismayed but not discouraged. The stipulations of this treaty have filled them with alarm and grief; but their zeal is unabated, their perseverance not to be overcome. Disappointed of the promised aid from their government, they have found a strong bulwark in the feelings of their country, and they rest with firm reliance on the virtue and constancy of parliament. By this reflection, by these hopes, all their exertions are supported; by these I am myself encouraged once more to solicit your attention on a subject of such unspeakable importance. The sentiments of an individual you might consider as exaggerated, his regrets unfounded, his apprehensions visionary. But the impressions under which I now address myself to your lordships are not confined to my own breast. The deep shame and sorrow, the heartfelt and indignant disappointment which burst from me on the very first appearance of this inconsiderate stipulation, are fully shared by a generous and feeling people. And though my own weak efforts should now fail, as they so often failed before, though the exertions of others should prove on this night as unsuccessful, as when for so many years together we laboured in this noble cause; yet may we once again, if its supporters be not wanting to themselves, anticipate with full assurance its renewed and final

triumph. The feelings of our countrymen are roused. They will not, they cannot consent to the revival of the Slave Trade. Never will they be brought to violate the sacred pledge which they have given for its abolition; never will they abrogate that solemn declaration promulgated by legislative authority, and sanctioned by universal approbation and concurrence. Much less will they consent that when after twenty years of difficulty and danger Providence has finally blessed our long efforts with victory and peace, this very moment should be chosen for dishonouring our great and glorious country by a public treaty; for making the British nation a contracting party in guilt, an instrument, a participator, an accomplice in crimes, which we have renounced in the face of God and man, and justly stigmatized with severe and ignominious punishment.

It is therefore on their behalf, it is in the name of the people of England, in support of their numerous and urgent petitions, that I plead before you on this day; to avert from them this unmerited disgrace, to rescue from disappointment and defeat that sacred cause in which they have already conquered, and to vindicate from the unhallowed intrusion of guilt and shame, their glorious triumph, the triumph of religion, of justice, and humanity.

For these purposes I shall in the course of this statement entreat your permission to lay before you without reserve my undisguised opinions on every part of this great subject: to examine what present resolutions our unlooked for disappointment demands from your wisdom and firmness, what final determination of parliament can alone replace our country on that proud eminence of virtue which she had before so nobly occupied. But the question itself which I am this day to propose to you, is in its nature far more limited. It is, however, a necessary preliminary to all decision. Without the knowledge which this is calculated to bring before us we cannot satisfactorily discuss the past, still less can we provide effectually for the future. The warmest advocates of this sacred cause may differ respecting those measures which, in circumstances of such unexpected difficulty, are best adapted to redeem the honour of our country, and to vindicate the rights of justice. But the motion which I shall now make must I think in every case challenge your support. I had indeed looked with confidence for its unanimous adoption. This expectation I am now told to renounce. I must prepare myself for opposition, but I am still unable to anticipate its grounds.

I am about to move that your lordships should make application to the throne for copies of the representations made by the British ministers at

Paris, in conformity to our unanimous address, for the immediate and universal abolition of the Slave Trade; and also of the answers returned to them on the part of the different governments with which we have negotiated. To doubt the existence of such papers would be to question the plighted faith of the crown. To dispute the propriety of communicating them to this house would be to establish new principles and rules of practice for the British constitution. Seldom does parliament interpose its previous advice in foreign negotiation. And in proportion to the rarity of the occurrence is the respect which such interference claims, and the importance attached to its success. Its failure therefore demands enquiry. We are bound to ask, we are entitled to learn, what cause has induced the servants of the public to act in opposition to the declared opinions of parliament. Such, even in transactions of far inferior moment, is the acknowledged principle by which the conduct of this house is usually governed. The full attainment of an object is permitted in most cases to supersede all discussion of the mode in which it has been negotiated; a partial success, or an incomplete proceeding, has often induced us to postpone enquiry; but where the treaty is definitive, and the failure total, what remains to us but to examine the course pursued? What other means can we resort to, either for the re-

medy of past evil, or for the prevention of that which may yet be feared? If we renounce this right, in what situation shall we stand? The dignity of this house has been committed, and the authority of the legislature set at nought: The wishes, the interests, the honour of our country have been sacrificed by a sacrilegious contract for guilt, profaning the very sanctuary of Mercy, and polluting the fairest monument of national virtue which any people had ever yet erected for the eternal remembrance and admiration of posterity. Yet shall not parliament enquire? In justice to ourselves, and still more to the wretched victims of this long protracted wickedness, in justice to the very persons who have signed or authorized this inauspicious article, shall we not investigate the circumstances of their misconduct; the unexpected causes in which it has originated, the extent of the mischief it has already produced, and the means, if any yet remain, of arresting that tide of blood which now threatens to pour in upon the Earth? From these papers alone can we learn what uncontrollable necessity compelled our ministers, in the most favourable circumstances under which any men ever yet treated for any object, not only to relinquish, but to counteract the expressed desire of parliament, the declared purpose of their sovereign? These, and these alone, can shew us, (a still more inte-

resting enquiry to them as well as to ourselves,) what hopes remain, what resources can yet be found for the protection of millions of their fellow creatures? what saving hand can yet be extended to that unhappy race whom our country had redeemed from misery, but whom our government, unwillingly, as we must believe, has again surrendered up, with so many circumstances of aggravated woe, to the most barbarous of all captivity, and the most unmitigated of all slavery?

Such, my lords, are the grounds, and such the objects of the motion which I am now to make: and if these be not sufficient to recommend it to your adoption, the functions of parliament have ceased. What stronger case than this can imagination devise, for scrutinizing with just suspicion and jealousy the conduct of any government? What motive of honour, policy, or justice, can ever hereafter rouse our feelings, if they be callous to a British treaty stipulating the revival of the Slave Trade?

But though I confidently rest my motion on this irremoveable basis of constitutional right and parliamentary duty, let not, I beseech you, its character be misunderstood. This is no party question. I mean not to disclaim the principle of party union. Far otherwise. The cooperation of honourable men in the public cause is essential to all the interests and all the rights of this free

community: it is the best foundation which they can lay for virtuous and useful service, the surest pledge which they can give to their country, the firmest security to themselves for upright and disinterested conduct. But with these principles my present motion has no connection. The demand of our country for the immediate and unqualified abolition of the Slave Trade rests not on any local, any temporary considerations, on any questions of constitutional right or political expediency. Its principles are universal, its foundations eternal. Grounded in immutable justice, and commanded by the plainest precepts of that religion which we profess in common, this great work of mercy claimed from the beginning the support of all good men of every description. On these motives its first promoter originally submitted it to parliament: he whose name it will transmit with unfading honour to all posterity; he whose memory generations yet unborn, and nations yet uncivilized will learn to bless. With these feelings the two great party leaders of our time fought and conquered together under his standard; establishing within these lists a suspension of all political hostilities; a sacred truce, like that truce of God by which the nations of Europe renounced for a season their private quarrels, or that peace which they once proclaimed to Chris-

tendom for the prosecution of what they deemed a holy war. But much more holy was this cause, with much more sanctity was this truce observed. And I should now disgrace their memory, I should disgrace my own conduct pursued in honourable concurrence with them, and adhered to with undeviating constancy for more than five and twenty years, I should dishonour, if it were possible, this sacred cause itself, could I consent to render it subservient to any personal or political animosities. But I have no such apprehension: I know myself incapable of it. No such feelings indeed are harboured in my breast. Much less could I permit them to mix themselves with a question involving every thing which religion and morality have taught me to hold dear. Justice and truth require, the interests of this great cause demand from me, that I should lay before you with unreserved sincerity its real situation. I must speak of the deep wound it has received; I must expose with grief and indignation the fatal consequences of its gratuitous surrender. But I enter on this sacred duty with the most awful impressions of its true nature and character; with feelings far superior to all personal considerations. Highly as I value my political connections, fondly as I cling to those private friendships and affections which it is my pride and happi-

ness to cultivate, yet there exists not on the Earth that man whom I so dearly love, as to have hesitated, had he been capable of signing such an act as this, to reprobate it here with just indignation. In whatever hands this cause had failed to your lordships my appeal would have been made. To this house I should have submitted with unfeigned earnestness the inestimable importance, the unspeakable value, of all the interests which have thus been abandoned; and I should have claimed, as I now claim, from your justice and piety, from the virtue of a British legislature, from the religion of a Christian country, the immediate revocation of so dishonourable and iniquitous an engagement.

For let me implore you to consider what it was which we fondly hoped that this negotiation would obtain for us, and what it has in fact surrendered. “In the name of our country,” such are the memorable words of our unanimous address, “in the name of our country and on the behalf of the interests of humanity, we entreat that the IMMEDIATE and TOTAL ABOLITION of the Slave Trade may be solicited from all the sovereigns of Europe. No moment, we think, was ever yet so favourable for stipulating a joint and irrevocable renunciation of these barbarous practices, and for promulgating by the assembled authority of the

“ whole civilized world, a solemn declaration,
 “ that to carry away into slavery the inhabitants
 “ of unoffending countries, is to violate the uni-
 “ versal law of nations, founded as that law
 “ must ever be, on the immutable principles of
 “ justice and religion.” This was the demand
 of Great Britain, her only demand; and even
 in its failure how proud the recital, how cheering
 the remembrance! These are the objects which we
 hoped to have accomplished, by the exertion of
 all our influence, and at the price of all our ac-
 quisitions. The negotiations are now con-
 cluded. The peace is made: Our conquests are
 restored: and what is the return? A joint de-
 claration of public law, proscribing for ever this
 enormous wickedness, in the name of all those
 just and powerful monarchs whom Providence
 has made the arbiters of Europe? An igno-
 minious and irreversible sentence passed on it by
 universal acclamation, and banishing it from its
 last refuge in the commerce or colonies of any
 Christian government? Such were our hopes. But
 we receive instead of these a partial contract, by
 which the British crown has sanctioned and
 guaranteed the Slave Trade! We find our own
 sovereign made the accomplice, our free and
 happy country the instrument of its revival
 and extension! By our own act we con-
 sign to misery, by our own hands we deliver

up again to slavery and death, thousands, millions, to whom our protection was already pledged, and whose voice perhaps in this very moment is lifted up to Heaven for blessings on our humanity!

On this government, with shame I say it, on this government, and on that of France alone this dishonour has fallen. The courts of Vienna, Petersburgh, and Berlin are silent; but England and France have spoken: France has proposed, England has consented, not to abolish but to revive, not to prohibit but to extend these horrors. And the world has seen, and seen for the first time in the history of these mighty monarchies, the sacred seal of their sovereigns affixed to an instrument which at once proclaims the infamy of the crime, and guarantees its commission.

What an example does this exhibit, what a lesson does it teach to their subjects! His most Christian majesty concurs with the king of Great Britain in considering the Slave Trade as “RE-PUGNANT TO THE PRINCIPLES OF NATURAL JUSTICE.” This is their solemn avowal, this declaration they invoke the Almighty to witness: in the name of the Holiest this treaty proclaims it to the world! Every sacrifice of liberty therefore — for the consequence is irresistible — every

sacrifice of liberty which this detestable traffic has produced these just monarchs consider as a ROBBERY, and every sacrifice of life they consider as a MURDER in the eyes of God and man. What follows? That they proscribe it, that they punish it, that they unite all their efforts to banish such wickedness for ever from the world, or at least to keep their own subjects clear and unspotted from the pollution of this enormous guilt? No my lords, the one demands, the other sanctions its revival: the one requires that for five years together the Earth may groan under this oppression, the other delivers over to him for that express purpose regions and climates of the globe: provinces by your interposition long since exempted from this scourge, nations already restored to freedom, a whole race and family of mankind to which the virtue of Great Britain had given security and happiness, but now by her hand replunged into miseries from the bare image of which the blood recoils, and the heart of man revolts.

Try such a conduct by the rules of private life. Imagine any man boasting to you in high swelling terms of his virtue and benevolence, calling Heaven to witness his principles of justice, his feelings of humanity, but adding, I know my present course of life to be repugnant to all these maxims; I condemn it as wicked, I

execrate it as rapacious, and sanguinary, and all
 I ask is that I may continue it only five years
 longer for my own profit. In what terms would
 he be answered? You would drive him with
 indignation from society. What different rule
 exists then for the conduct of governments?
 What exemption have they acquired from the
 obligations of natural justice? Where have
 they learnt that the principles of moral right are
 less binding on those whose duty it is to enforce
 them on others? From what law human or
 divine have they collected, in what code of
 reason or revelation have they found that ini-
 quity becomes less criminal in proportion as
 its operation is more extended and its example
 more commanding? Justice, it was once nobly
 said, and by a monarch of France, justice if
 banished from every other corner of the Earth
 should still be found in the hearts of princes.
 Justice in their hearts, good faith in their
 actions, truth upon their lips. On these virtues
 should their thrones be established, by these
 alone can they stand secure. Thus only can
 they challenge the obedience of their subjects,
 thus only can they ask, thus only can they ex-
 pect that protection on which all human power
 is dependent. But if they set their conduct in
 open contradiction to their principles, if they
 prostitute the language of virtue to cover guilt,

and proclaim justice only to authorize iniquity, where are then the foundations of their hope?

In our own country, my lords, the moral principle is the pervading spirit of all our institutions. It is implanted in the hearts, and deeply rooted in the character of our people. It is from this that our laws derive their execution, our government its stability. By this we flourish, in this we exist. But when our public authorities openly violate the sanctity of all moral obligation, when the crown by its most solemn acts, the legislature by its concurrence and sanction teach us to prefer profit to duty, and convenience to right, the very foundations of our society are shaken. Dissolve this cement and you destroy the fabric. Extinguish the vital spark which animates the mass, the source of all its energies, the parent of all its virtues, and what will remain to you? A lifeless carcass mouldering into the dust!

Nor is this contrast between profession and conduct, this opposition of avowed practice to acknowledged duty less ominous of evil to that country for whose supposed advantage it is stipulated. What miseries has not France already suffered from this cause? How dearly has she bought the lesson, how bitter is the experience which has taught her that virtue consists not in the declaration but in the practice of right.

No wrongs, too well has she proved it by her example, no wrongs are so lasting, no wickedness so flagitious as that which is ushered in with the parade and profession of justice. Such hypocrisy not only adds insult to cruelty; it hardens the heart of the oppressor, it destroys the last hope of the sufferer. Look back on the history of the last twenty years. What plunder, what proscriptions, what massacres did France endure in all the long course of her calamities, that were not always varnished over with the colouring of justice, that were not prefaced with pompous declarations of extended freedom and universal benevolence? When were her tyrants loudest in declaring their hatred of oppression? When did they with fondest expressions of devotion recognize, proclaim, and sanctify the rights of natural justice? It was when they bound the nations in chains, and deluged the Earth with blood.

Could we have expected that their example should now be so closely followed? That the name of her restored king, the seal of her re-established monarchy, should have been affixed in the first moments of returning tranquillity to such an article as this; should have sanctioned in the hour of her own deliverance this mockery of violated principle, this sanguinary denunciation of merciless cruelty?

Of the person of any foreign prince, of the acts of any foreign government, we should all wish to express ourselves in this place with becoming deference. For the present sovereign of France I have many strong inducements to feel high personal veneration. But if any words of mine could find a respectful access to a monarch in whose restoration to the throne of his ancestors no man has more truly rejoiced than I have, I should not fear in such a cause to speak to him with unqualifying freedom both of his situation and his duties. To him so long the victim of triumphant iniquity, no hope of repose even yet remains but in the prevalence of justice. No stranger himself to misfortune, on him the wretched have a double claim; a signal instance himself of the protection of Providence, on him the obligations of mercy press with accumulated force. To be driven from his native soil, to wander in exile, to eat the bread of dependence, to see his country enslaved, his friends proscribed, his family destroyed, and all that he had ever valued, or loved, or revered, made the sport and prey of rapacious avarice and savage cruelty, this has been the bitterness of his lot. With what feelings then must not he consider the fate of thousands torn like him from their country, but with circumstances how much more dreadful: severed like him from

their families, or still more unhappy in the community of suffering: lamenting like him the destruction of all that was dearest to their hearts, but not finding, as he found, any respite or intermission of calamity: captives in an unknown land, toiling for the profit of their oppressors, wasting in hopeless slavery the unhappy remnant of their days, and entailing on their children the same unmitigated misery. To be preserved from the bloody machinations of those by whom his house had nearly been extinguished, to be redeemed from his long banishment, to be restored to the wishes and prayers of his people, to find in their love the reward of all his sufferings, to deliver them in return both from military despotism and foreign invasion, to be the channel of peace to his own country and security to Europe, and the instrument as we trust of long blessings to mankind, these are the mercies which were reserved for him by Providence. On whom then if not on him is it incumbent to hear the prayer of the friendless, to listen to the sorrowful complaining of the captive? Whose feelings, more than his, must shrink from authorizing the infliction of misery for gain? Who more than he must tremble to habituate his people to fresh cruelties, to open to them new paths of blood-guiltiness, and to provoke after all their sufferings the unexhausted

judgments of Heaven, on this deliberate, hardened, unrelenting barbarity?

Well therefore may we credit the assertion which is made in his behalf. With full assurance may we believe how great must have been his reluctance in subscribing this opprobrious article. It must be so. His sympathy for affliction, his inborn worth, his moral and his religious principles, and his full knowledge of this subject, derived from long residence in England, have doubtless implanted in his breast an indignant abhorrence of the Slave Trade. Would to God that he had acted on his own impressions! That he had followed the dictates of his own feeling heart! No present convenience, we may be assured, would then have been accounted paramount to a moral duty: no speculative profit in crime, no pretended necessity for robbery and murder would then have been suffered to stigmatize with the revival of these dreadful iniquities the happy æra of his restoration. Pure and unqualified would then have been the rejoicings of good men in that blessed work of general pacification to which his reestablishment alone could give the stamp and seal of permanence. The acclamations of Europe, the prayers of France for his prosperity, her sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving for peace restored, and liberty secured,

would then have reached the skies unmixed with the cry and clamour of blood, unpolluted by the groans and shrieks of millions of human victims destined to the sanguinary altars of a remorseless avarice.

But if he in opposition to his own better judgment and feeling has yielded to prejudices still perhaps too prevalent in France, if the government of that unhappy country has not yet learnt from all her sufferings to respect the freedom and life of man, if any portion of her people in utter ignorance of the extent of misery created, and the enormity of wickedness guaranteed by this article, has brought itself to desire, to approve, or even to endure its stipulations, yet from our own ministers other things were to be expected. They had no prejudice to encounter, no opposition to surmount. Far different were the demands of the British parliament, far different the sanguine expectations of those for whom they negotiated. By what plea then, by what palliation, could they be reconciled, by what imaginable motive could they be rendered parties to this iniquity? They the organs of a people unanimous in its condemnation, apprized of all its horrors, impressed with all its guilt, foremost in removing its pollution from ourselves, and waiting with confident but impatient hope the glad tidings of its universal abolition. Is it possible that they

alone of all the inhabitants of this country could view with indifference the revival of the Slave Trade? Is it in the avowal of guilt that they have found an apology for its commission, or have their feelings of just abhorrence for this sanguinary cruelty been satisfied by the pretended shortness of the period for which this article professes to authorize its continuance? For five years only — Will this be their apology? — For five years only France demands and England sanctions the renewal of these crimes! Five years only of injustice and rapine, of blood and desolation laying waste a whole quarter of the globe. What a consolation to resort to, even if it were well founded! But does any man on Earth believe that the expiration of this horrid lease of guilt, will really produce the extinction of the crime? On what does he rely? Will he trust to the good faith of a stipulation which is itself an open disclaimer of all moral obligation? Or are we yet to learn that this pretence of postponing the execution of their engagements is the stalest of all the artifices under which faithless politicians mask, but without concealing, the determination to evade them. The violations of such promises to whom are they not familiar? But in what history shall we find the example of their observance? In its ordinary form a treaty of peace executes itself: its cessions are conditional,

its restitutions gradual, its advantages reciprocal. But stipulations such as this what is their value? Vows of future amendment coupled with present perseverance in guilt, sacrifices promised to be made when the danger which extorts them shall have ceased, and solemn assurances of future liberality and justice for whose accomplishment we are to wait till avarice shall have been satiated with rapine!

And yet there is no other ground on which we can build our hopes. Will delay facilitate their attainment? Do we look hereafter for events more fortunate, for circumstances more favourable to our influence than these which we have now neglected? Or do we expect to obtain five years hence by the spontaneous concession of France that renunciation of felonious profit which neither peace, nor commerce, nor augmented territory have purchased from her, which she has refused to the united authority of all the greatest European nations, to the memory of her own calamities, to the sense of her own deliverance, and even to the most urgent considerations of present political expediency?

She has at this time no Slave Trade. All her present interests are prejudiced by its revival: she sacrifices to this iniquity the strong, the just claims of her trade, her manufactures, and her agriculture. Her commercial capital exhausted by her long miseries is wholly insufficient for the

calls of domestic industry. By diverting it at this moment to distant speculations, by embarking it in hazardous and ruinous enterprizes, she must retard her own progress in recovery. This abuse of her remaining strength, this improvident misdirection of vital power, must prolong both the symptoms and the consequences of disease. In her colonies the mischief will be still more sensible. There by the operation of British laws this wickedness had long since been prohibited. Her planters have conformed themselves to its abolition. That just and beneficent measure has introduced into their islands, as into our own, new modes of culture, and new systems of internal management. By its natural and inevitable effects it has meliorated the condition of their slaves. A blessed consequence of a righteous act! A just reward of mercy, pouring balm into the wounds of those wretched victims, and giving to the colonist for whom they labour a confidence and security which nothing else could ever have afforded: a security to him against those perils which the just laws of nature have inseparably annexed to unrelenting oppression; a security to France herself against the recurrence of those unmeasurable calamities which have already overwhelmed in irretrievable ruin the richest of her foreign settlements. How blind then is the rashness of her government, how desperate the danger which it incurs

in seeking to tread back this first step in the progress of civil society! How unnatural, how impious is the attempt of her planters again to barbarize the cultivators of their soil, and to replunge into savage ferocity that unhappy race on whose submission they themselves must be dependent for their daily safety! To exalt the condition and character of mankind, to promote their moral improvement, and thereby to increase their social happiness, has in all ages been esteemed the best work of wisdom and virtue, the highest glory of statesmen and legislators; but to degrade, to debase, to vilify our nature, to turn our fellow creatures back again from that rank which they have already attained in the scale of human beings, what labour more dishonourable can employ our faculties or occupy our thoughts, what project more detestable has avarice ever conceived or power adopted?

And yet it is not in the West Indies only, but much more in Africa, that this iniquitous stipulation must operate to this revolting consequence. In those countries what might not France have atchieved? That long line of coast which we have replaced under her dominion, that immense tract of continent over which we have made her influence again predominant, what a theatre of glory, what a scope for noble enterprize do they not present? What benefits might she not have secured to them? What

profit, what strength, what unperishable praise and gratitude to herself? Under the happy auspices of the abolition of the Slave Trade, and by the noble efforts of this country consequent upon that measure, civilization had already made in Africa no inconsiderable progress. A just and innocent traffic, tending to our common advantage, supplying our mutual necessities, we had already opened with that continent. To France the same path was obvious; pointed out not more by our example than by her own interest. Emulating the virtue of Great Britain and sharing its great reward, labouring, with much less difficulty and with much surer success, in that ample field which we had already cleared and purified from the contagious atmosphere of guilt, she might have reaped instead of scattering the rich harvest of our exertions. The arts of industry, the kindly and benevolent intercourse of social life, she might have opened to those countries; the reciprocal gains of legitimate commerce, were placed within her own reach. What infatuation is it to have relinquished all the profit and all the glory of this course for that nefarious and wide wasting iniquity which by a just retribution of Providence is scarcely less destructive to its instruments than to its victims; for a traffic which brutalizes the character of man, for a

navigation murderous to more than one half of the sailors who embark in it, and for a system of culture tending inevitably to ruin her planters, and to desolate her colonies!

Such are the considerations which might have been presented to those with whom we treated; considerations founded in justice, supported by policy, and confirmed by our own example. These arguments we might have urged, and if urged with zeal, could they in this negotiation have been urged in vain?

But how different will be the case when the Slave Trade shall already for five years have been reestablished in France. How many new obstacles shall we ourselves have then raised up against our own wishes! How much greater difficulties than those to which her sovereign has now reluctantly yielded, how much more formidable an opposition must he then surmount for redeeming his plighted faith and executing the tardy purpose of his justice! With peace abroad, with domestic tranquillity such as all good men wish to her, how much in that period will her trading capital and credit have increased. A pleasing prospect, and animating hope to those who have learnt to desire the prosperity of other nations both for their sakes and for our own. But under the accursed influence of this article, with the growth of wealth the growth of crime

will keep pace. Before five years shall have elapsed how much property will by public encouragement have been embarked in this wicked traffic, how many trades, how many manufactures, how many establishments, will have been connected with it, how many new and extensive interests created in its support?

We know, our own memories will but too well suggest them, what arguments will then be employed to defend these barbarous crimes; with what pertinacity and vehemence of zeal the slave dealer will then uphold his detested occupation. But it is from the fatal contract which we are now considering, from the treaty which a British parliament is now required to approve and ratify, that he will then derive his principal support. In this arsenal his strongest weapons will have been forged: Against the authors of this article he will use them with irresistible effect. That commerce for the revival of which the state has stipulated cannot, he will say, be in itself iniquitous. Those gains,—thus he will argue, and in what manner shall his government reply to him?—those gains which you have with such anxious solicitude secured and guaranteed to us for five years it cannot afterwards be the interest of our country to renounce. That benefit which a rival power was compelled to yield in the close of successful war she must not be suffered to ex-

tort from us in peace. Her hypocritical condemnation of a trade to the revival of which she was herself a party, her interested remonstrances against the morality of her own bargain and covenant, her appeals to that religion which she now proclaims herself by her own engagement to have violated, all these can produce in our minds only an increased conviction of the importance of the advantages which she desires us to abandon. You must preserve therefore, he will exclaim, addressing his own legislature in clamorous demands for injustice, in pathetic supplications for cruelty, such as have often resounded within these walls, you must preserve from this impending ruin your trembling merchants, your despairing manufacturers, your planters already struggling under distress and difficulty. The *labouring population* of your colonies, (for by some such smooth term he also will have learnt to soften down the revolting image of a death-like slavery,) the labouring population of your colonies must be kept up, their culture maintained, their produce increased. Thus only, he will assure his government, can the proprietor subsist and the colonies flourish; thus only he will add, reechoing the confident assertions of British cruelty, but forgetting their decisive contradiction in the happier experience of British justice, thus only can the mother country de-

rive from her dependencies a just retribution of commercial wealth and maritime strength.

But still more powerful will be his appeal to the change which this treaty will already have produced in the condition of those settlements themselves. The law of abolition, which in its continuance would now be profitable to the planter, must then, he will truly say, impose upon him by its re-enactment renewed and increased sacrifices. The revival of the Slave Trade will already by its blasting and malignant influence have poisoned the growing promise of a more merciful system. For keeping up a servile population, foreign supply is incompatible with domestic increase. They rest on opposite principles: in their progress they obstruct, in their operation they counteract each other. The basis of the one is humanity, if to the increase of slavery in any form that term can justly be applied; its necessary consequence—we have now learnt it from experience as well as from reason—its necessary consequence is a gradual improvement in the condition of the slave. The other is built on cruelty, on pure unmitigated cruelty; it admits no qualifying principle, it bars up all progress to good, it is supported only by a continual accession of evil. This is the system which a British treaty will already have reestablished in those

colonies: a system in itself nefarious, in its consequences still more detestable. A chain and succession of misery and crime; the cause evil, the effect worse, and each, by a reaction which daily grows more terrible in its increase, continuing, reproducing, perpetuating the other! New importations from Africa, a new waste of life in the islands, a new demand for fresh slaves; new sufferings, new fears, new cruelties: the planter overwhelmed with debt, his capital unprofitable, his produce depreciated; yet his increasing expenditure still demanding more extended culture, and that again requiring the farther accumulation of the miserable victims from whose unmitigated toil it must be exacted; the overseer in the mean time regardless of their condition, the proprietor estimating his gains only by the increasing severity of their labour, and those wretched beings themselves sunk in hopeless despondency, or rendered ferocious by despair.

And Africa — Africa my lords! Will she, even if this horrid cruelty could cease at the expiration of its stipulated term, will she then be replaced in her present condition? Will years, will centuries repair to her the aggravated miseries heaped upon her by this wicked stipulation? It can never once have entered into the hearts of those who framed it to conceive

the wretchedness to which they have delivered over so many millions of unoffending beings, clinging with vain hope to the protection of Great Britain. We talk of reviving the Slave Trade, as if we were about to reestablish only those evils dreadful as they were which have before existed; as if the cruelties now to be perpetrated would bear any resemblance or proportion to any hitherto experienced infliction of human misery. We talk of carrying it on for five years as if that long period of crime could also circumscribe within the same limits the permanence of its terrible consequences. But let no man so deceive himself. In comparison with the suddenness, the extent, the enormity, and duration of the sufferings created by this article, the past wickedness even of the Slave Trade itself is humanity and mercy. This will be no ordinary traffic in the misery of man; no continuance of woes to which the wretched condition of that country had already been accommodated; no regular balance of demand and supply such as cold calculators in the blood of their fellow creatures had established for filling up that annual waste of human life which their cruelty occasioned. It is the dreadful character of this stipulation to convert charity itself into oppression, and to render our past benefits the instruments only of aggravated

torture. The former prohibition of this horrid traffic, a blessed gift of mercy as we fondly hoped to those unhappy countries, will now become a principal cause of their miseries. Seven years of security and freedom will have prepared them only to feel more keenly the severity of this renewed infliction. The hopes which we had taught them to cherish of perpetual exemption from this cruelty, the efforts which we had made to efface from their remembrance its last vestiges of crime and woe, our endeavours to train them to better habits and happier feelings, the influence of our exhortations, the benefit of our example, the arts, the knowledge, the virtues of our country which we have laboured to diffuse among them, what will all these be, but new sources of misery to a people among whom the Slave Trade is about to be reestablished? Reestablished did I say? Among whom it is about to be carried to an extent unimagined in any former period of their sufferings. Fresh crimes, multiplied calamities, must now compensate for the short respite yielded to them by our humanity. Increasing cruelties will be required to fill up that void and deficiency of guilt which it was once our boast to have created, our delight to contemplate. Even the expectation of future abolition, the vain and illusory promise of this treaty, in-

effectual to any good purpose, nugatory in the eyes of the statesman, offensive in those of the moralist, will yet powerfully contribute to stimulate the exertions of the slave dealer. To compensate for the past suspension of this wickedness, and to prepare himself for its future prohibition, to gorge the cravings of avarice so long kept from its prey, and to provide against the threatened interruption of its horrid feast, will be his unremitted employment throughout the whole duration of that terrible period for which you have suffered him to range at his pleasure over this field of blood. No former scale or proportion of guilt will regulate his present efforts. The population of Africa will be drained, the markets of America glutted with human victims. Those cruelties which stand recorded on your journals, and whose recital harrowed up the souls even of the most unfeeling of mankind, all these will not be revived only but multiplied an hundredfold by the operation of this treaty. What will not Africa suffer from a sudden demand for slaves following the long suspension of this trade, and infinitely exceeding the utmost amount of any former supply? To what extremity of wretchedness will not the miserable population of the islands be reduced by an immense and speculative importation, calculated only on

future contingencies, but with no reference to any present want, or any present possibility of profitable employment! Imagination can scarcely conceive the extent of evil let loose upon mankind by this inconsiderate and barbarous concession; the varied and accumulated woes to which it subjects an unfortunate and defenceless race in every stage of their long career of misery. All that you have ever read or heard or pictured to yourselves of the past horrors of the Slave Trade, will fall far short of these calamities: calamities now suspended over these unhappy victims as by a hair, a tempest and hurricane of destruction ready to burst on their devoted heads; rending asunder every tie of social or domestic life, involving in one common ruin every principle which operates to the consolation or happiness of man, and leaving to them on Earth one hope only, the hope of your interposition and protection.

God grant that this interposition may be immediate, this protection effectual! Great as these evils are, I confidently hope that to repair them is still within our power. That we might have prevented them, that we might in this treaty have accomplished to their very utmost extent the fondest wishes of our country, who is it that even pretends to doubt? We were masters of the negotiation. Its success de-

pended wholly on our own fortitude. On us the duty was cast, to us the trust had been committed, of banishing for ever from the world these heart-rending miseries. In this cause the example of Great Britain was all-powerful, her sentence decisive, her determination final. With her it rested to do justice to Africa. Urged by her voice the claim was irresistible, conferred by her hand the benefit would have been complete; its influence coextensive with the evil, its permanence secured beyond the possibility of change. This is the high station which she might have occupied, this the unfading palm of glory which by the result of her long efforts against injustice and tyranny had finally been placed within her reach. What work of power can be conceived more dignified, what honour brighter, what delight more elevated? In this great æra of the reestablishment of Europe it was her's still farther to diffuse the happiness, to extend to other quarters of the globe the exultation of mankind; it was her's to exhibit to the admiration of the world the inhabitants of these distant regions as parties in the proud triumph of national independence, to lead them on with willing steps in our joyful procession of victory, and to present them with humble thankfulness an acceptable offering to the throne of mercy; not as captives but as redeemed, not as

the victims of ambition and avarice polluting our rejoicings by the cruel spectacle of their aggravated wretchedness, but as our fellow creatures owing to us their happiness, and dating from our successes the completion of their own deliverance. This we might have done: what we have really done I forbear to repeat. The remembrance is afflicting, the recital humiliating.

And let it not be imagined that I am speaking to you now my own opinion only. That the immediate and total abolition of the Slave Trade might in this treaty, if pursued with zeal, have been with certainty obtained, is, unless I am greatly misinformed, the general sentiment of all who are conversant in foreign negotiation; the concurrent and decided judgment of enlightened statesmen in every country in Europe. But if any man denies it, let the papers which I this day move for be laid before us. Their evidence will be decisive. Even the very fact of their production would afford some presumption of sincerity, some ground to hope that error or misfortune only have been the occasion of this failure, something to counteract that first impression of criminal indifference which the present appearances of this transaction have unavoidably and universally produced. Should this communication be refused, should all other information be denied to us I leave it to your lordships to

pronounce what conclusion the concealment authorizes.

For in truth my lords this is no subject of diplomatic mystery. It is not by secret intrigue, by underhand artifice that we shall ever advance, much less accomplish, this noble undertaking. Whatever has yet been achieved in resistance to the Slave Trade has been the result not of concealment but of publicity; the fruit of open discussion, the victory of public opinion. To this, under Providence, we are solely indebted for past success; to this alone it is evident we must now look for final triumph. In courts and cabinets, it appears, these cruelties find acquiescence and connivance; in the conventions and treaties of governments it is thought not unbecoming to grant a license for crime, to assign a stipulated period for robbery and murder. And if the British parliament and people animated with juster feelings still ardently desire the final abolition of the Slave Trade, one course alone remains to us. Let us tear off from these iniquitous compromises their affected disguise, and expose to the indignant censure of mankind all those persons, be they who they may, who perpetrate, who authorize, who sanction that wickedness.

In this case indeed every attempt at concealment is nugatory. We already know too much to

be deceived. The official papers may be denied to us, the substantial knowledge cannot be withheld. Judge for yourselves. Examine those circumstances which are notorious to the world, look at the merits of this cause, consider the advantages by which it might have been supported, reflect on the situation in which it has been abandoned, and then pronounce whether it be possible that this dishonourable stipulation for guilt, if firmly resisted by Great Britain, could ever have been imposed upon us by France. No such apprehension was felt by parliament when the unanimous addresses of both houses were voted; none such was hinted by your government, none such was found to qualify the solemn assurances which we received from the throne. Armed with these authorities and in such a cause what difficulty could a British negotiator experience? Impressed as he should have been with the magnitude of his trust, and reverencing as he ought to reverence the legislature of his country, he would have left in this case no opening for denial, no opportunity for debate. The voice of a free people, unanimous in the demand of justice, is imperative, he would have said, on all its public servants. I come here to obey, not to violate, the orders of my sovereign, to execute, not to defeat, the intentions of my

country. Never will I be brought to dishonour both by making them the active instruments of an iniquity which they abhor, and which they have declared their purpose for ever to extirpate from the world!

In the circumstances of this treaty what answer could France have made to such a declaration? We negotiated in the hour of victory. Her colonies were in our hands; her American islands, her African settlements; the objects and the theatre of these crimes. By the injustice of her ruler all Europe had been leagued against her. Our own army occupied her southern provinces, the armies of our allies her capital. England had nothing to ask and every thing to restore. Parliament had desired only to stipulate for justice; and we have not obtained it even by the sacrifice of all our conquests!

Our demand was supported by the powerful influence of our allies. Why did we ourselves abandon it? I am confident it will not be denied that their opinion, that the opinion of the Emperor of Russia most particularly, was plainly and forcibly expressed in decided concurrence with the wishes of the British parliament, and in favour of immediate and universal abolition. Into the hands of those powers, and into our own, by the astonishing reverses of these two last

years, the fate of Europe had been committed. With them and with us it rested to dictate the just conditions of honourable peace. I speak not of unreasonable demands, insulting to the dignity or injurious to the independence of France. Against these a just and successful effort of national resistance might still have been excited. But such claims as moderation and equity would sanction, wisdom and virtue recommend, her government had no power to refuse. Her armies were for the time subdued, her military tyrant was dethroned, her people wished for peace, and her situation demanded it. The very stipulations of this treaty itself, all except the article which we are now considering, would prove beyond all power of denial, even if the fact were not itself notorious, that she concluded it under the pressure of strong necessity enforcing the obligations of right. She has made by it large sacrifices of unjust dominion and power; she has relinquished her usurpation of provinces, kingdoms, and empires; she has renounced, forever I trust renounced, her impious project of universal sovereignty; she has withdrawn herself nearly, for the sake of example and justice I would it had been wholly, within the boundaries of her former territory. Why is it that of all the crimes with which she had visited the Earth our indulgence

has only been extended to the Slave Trade? Were her other concessions purely voluntary? Did repentance, did justice alone dictate them? By the fall of an ambitious and rapacious usurper her councils, we may well believe it, are become more moderate. We give full credit to the better dispositions of a legitimate and virtuous monarch. But was it by his discretion that the conditions of this treaty were regulated? Was he enabled by the situation of his country to select and to apportion the sacrifices which she has made in atonement of so many years of guilt, and as a just and necessary peace offering to mankind? Is nothing to be ascribed to the predominance of a victorious league? Nothing to the indignant resentment of so many nations stimulated by long suffering and intolerable insult to an unanimous and irresistible effort? Had the days of Leipsic and Victoria, had the triumphs of the Russian or the German sovereigns, had the trophies of our own illustrious commander no weight in this negotiation? And to what purpose more honourable to him, to what purpose more glorious to our country could the achievements of British valour be applied than to the maintenance of this proudest work of British justice? Those on the contrary who have thought it

lawful to sanction by this article the revival of the Slave Trade, those who now applaud the policy, or acquiesce in the supposed necessity of that dishonourable contract, must believe that France had still the power to maintain iniquity by arms. There is no other ground on which it can be defended. I ask then, if that was her situation, why do we boast of our forbearance? On what ground do our allies lay claim to the praise of moderation? Is it not from the consciousness of superior force? Let no man suppose that I would justify, much less advise the abuse of that superiority. All just men, all wise men would deprecate it. Leagued for national independence, and triumphing over unprincipled ambition, it would ill become the sovereigns of countries so recently delivered from invasion and subjugation to employ their reestablished power in projects to despoil others, or to aggrandize themselves. The means, the circumstances of their deliverance authorize no such attempts. God forbid! The triumph of justice is no foundation for robbery: The blessing of Providence on self defence affords no encouragement to aggression. But our preponderance, I repeat it, was irresistible in the cause of right. Can you doubt it? Once more I entreat you, look at the treaty itself. Our allies

in all that they could reasonably ask from the common enemy, (such she then was, but now I trust no longer so to be considered,) have fully succeeded. They forgot resentment, they disclaimed ambition; justice they required and justice they have obtained. In every other instance, to every other power in Europe justice has been rendered by France: To Great Britain only she has refused it, and on the single subject of this article! What man really believes that if urged with equal earnestness this point alone was unattainable? What credulity will acquiesce in the pretence that to extort from France the surrender of her conquests was easy, to dissuade her from the revival of the Slave Trade impracticable?

But in this case it belonged to us not to ask but to grant; not to solicit but to prescribe the conditions necessary to effect our purpose. The means of enforcing it were exclusively in our own hands. Our interests, our glory were concerned in its success; to us the right had accrued, by us the claim could effectually have been maintained, by our act alone could it ever have been surrendered. From what settlements in Africa, to what colonies in the West Indies is it that France now designs to carry on the Slave Trade? What coasts will she pollute

with this iniquity, what countries will she desolate, what seas will she dye with blood? Those only which we occupied, those of which we and our allies were in the undisturbed possession, those to which no access could possibly have been opened to France but by the intervention of Great Britain.

An exception, I am told, is to be made to this assertion, the exception of St. Domingo; a name at the very sound of which any man should sink into the Earth who has made himself a party to the revival of the Slave Trade even for an hour! Of that exception I shall presently speak. All the other colonies of France were in the hands of the allies, and all her settlements in Africa were occupied by ourselves.

Why then were all these surrendered without stipulating the abolition of the Slave Trade? What pretext can be found for this gratuitous sacrifice of justice and honour? What motive could recommend to those who administered the interests of Great Britain this wanton violation of her most sacred duties? I condemn not the restitution of our conquests. In this great settlement of the interests of mankind it was not fitting that we should struggle to retain these acquisitions either for profit or dominion. I wish only that we had made them the pledges and se-

curity for justice. It is the interest of Great Britain that wars should cease; that the independence of nations should be respected, their governments secure, their rights inviolable. Our possession of the French colonies gave us a decisive influence in this negotiation: to the peace and freedom of Europe it was fit to apply that influence, and if it shall be found that by their cession those objects have been secured, I do not hesitate to applaud it as just and advantageous. But could we not at the same time so qualify our grant that it should neither operate to the destruction of others, nor work our own dishonour? If we were liberal to our enemy, if we were generous in our concern for other countries, was there no claim upon us for justice to those to whom our protection had been pledged? In their case we have not only violated our own peculiar duties, we have departed even from the established practice of all civilized nations. In every other instance of restitution or surrender which for centuries has been negotiated in Europe, in every other article by which this very treaty transfers the possession of any territories, provision has always been made for the security of their inhabitants. No other individual of any countries ceded or restored can be disturbed or molested

in person or in property. In Africa only whole nations are avowedly consigned by this surrender to plunder and massacre: In the hour of triumph only, under the awful impressions of her own recent dangers, and as a return to Heaven for her own deliverance, Great Britain has sacrificed those whom the events of this long protracted contest had committed to her protection. It is on the eve of returning peace, in the very moment in which she proclaims tranquillity and security to the world, that she has by her own spontaneous contract sent over a whole continent this fiery brand, the harbinger of perpetual desolation.

I reflect with deep affliction that this humiliation and guilt, if it could have been apprehended, might have been prevented by your lordships. The address which has this night been read, and the assurances which we received in answer, do indeed, even as they now stand, appear to me sufficiently expressive of the just expectations of parliament, and of our country. Our own demand for an immediate and total abolition of the Slave Trade, and the promise of our government to labour earnestly for that object, are not easily reconciled with a gratuitous agreement for the continuance of that wickedness, still less with an active inter-

position for its revival. But the debt of justice might, I acknowledge it, have been still more unequivocally claimed. Had our address expressly demanded from the crown, and in such terms as should have excluded even the possibility of cavil, that none of those colonies or settlements, in which our country had for ever prohibited the Slave Trade, should be yielded up again to any power on Earth without a stipulation ensuring to them the continuance of that blessing, what member of a British house of lords would not zealously have supported it? Had the just claim and right of parliament to this acquiescence in its solemn determination been explicitly and authoritatively notified to the servants of the public, what minister would have had the hardihood to disregard them? Our demand must in that case have been seasonably and timely brought forward by those who treated for us; stated in the very outset of the negotiations, urged with an earnestness proportioned to its inestimable importance, and annexed as an inseparable condition to every discussion for the surrender of our conquests. And who then could doubt the certainty of its success? That this imperious necessity was not imposed upon our government who does not now lament? I grieve

for the omission, its consequences I shall never cease to deplore. They are the more painful to me because I myself concurred in dissuading this unusual but necessary measure, recommended by the better judgment of others who far more correctly estimated the impending danger.

How shall I now apologize for my error? How shall I justify to your lordships or to myself this pernicious and misplaced confidence? I trusted indeed to solemn and reiterated assurances. I gave credit for feelings congenial with my own. Even in the absence of every sentiment which such a subject should inspire, I still believed that the unanimous wishes of our country, and the general concurrence of mankind, would be of powerful, of irresistible force to prevent the possibility of what has now been done. Such an act I was persuaded could not be in the contemplation of any public men. It could not be their desire to be transmitted to posterity as the revivers of the accursed Slave Trade. Whatever had been their former conduct on that subject, they could not wish, (so I thought, and so I argued,) to undermine the noblest monument of the glory of their country, and to annihilate the most extensive work of practical good which benevolence and justice have

ever yet atchieved for the interests of mankind. We were told this day, in reference to that great commander whose victories have added lustre to the British character,—and just was the sentiment, and well was it applied,—that next to the consciousness of virtue its purest reward on Earth is the recollection of its having contributed to the happiness of our fellow creatures. Who then could believe that such an opportunity as this would be wilfully neglected for confirming to millions blessings almost beyond the power of man to bestow? Who could anticipate that any British ministers would wantonly expose themselves to the remorse and anguish of reflecting how dreadful both in its present inflictions, and future consequences, how widely diffused, how long continued must be the wretchedness which they have now created; how many individuals, how many families, how many generations, what incalculable numbers of helpless beings, what an unmeasurable extent of the provinces and regions of Africa, reaching from its blood-stained coasts back to its inmost and inaccessible solitudes, what an immense and fearful proportion of mankind this article with heedless indifference and cruelty has delivered up to slavery and death, to misery and desolation!

But I went further. I not only concluded

this unqualified surrender not to be in the intention of our government ; I doubted, and on mature reflection I still more strongly doubt, whether it was legally within their competence.

Parliament has long since proscribed the Slave Trade, not as a prohibited wrong, but as a moral crime ; declared it repugnant to universal justice, and stamped upon it the character and punishment of ignominious guilt. Under what authority then have our ministers assumed to covenant for its continuance ? By what warrant of English law have they compromised and bargained for felony ? Where shall we look for that prerogative which the crown itself has exercised in this case ? A claim of more than dispensing power ; a pretension not to suspend but to abrogate our statutes ; an undertaking to subject to a nefarious iniquity those very countries which our legislature had expressly exempted from it ! Is it permitted to a British monarch to sanction by sovereign power, to facilitate by regal intervention, and to guarantee by the public faith crimes which not only violate our own laws but transgress the eternal boundaries of good and evil ? I know not how this assumed preeminence of power over right, this open warranty of acknowledged guilt could be defended under any form of government administered by law. But I am certain that

there are many and strong grounds for considering it a high misdemeanour against the British constitution. Nor can I discern on what grounds of justice our laws can punish as a felon the man who delivers into slavery a few individuals, if our treaties in the same moment can proclaim impunity to those who inflict this misery on millions!

Will it be pretended that this unlawful act was necessary for peace? No man can believe it. Even if it were so you would not hesitate to answer that peace is too dearly purchased by the breach of our constitution, and by the violation of natural justice. But how is it possible in this case to listen to such a defence? I will not repeat what I have said of the relative situation of the powers who treated. Look at the subject itself. See the abhorrence with which these crimes are viewed by all who do not participate in their iniquitous gain; and then decide what credit is due to those who insinuate,—they have never ventured to assert,—that the revival of the Slave Trade was made by France an indispensable condition of peace. The fact is utterly incredible. The papers which I now move for would I am confident disprove it. Our reason rejects it, our feelings revolt at it. Could such a menace, brought forward in this negotiation and for such a purpose

intimidate any British agent into a submission which dishonours our national character? What could he fear in such a cause? The voice of our own country? The spirit of France? The opinion of Europe? Or that righteous judgment on which the issues of war depend? After the honourable labours of twenty years was this a yoke to which Great Britain should bow down her neck in victory? We had arrested by our unshaken perseverance the long progress of iniquity. Fearless and unanimous in the cause of justice, our glorious country had courted the hate of the triumphant oppressor, defied his bitter revilings, and turned back his sanguinary menaces upon his own head. The moderation of our people in success had equalled their firmness in danger. We had tendered to France in this negotiation more than either justice or reason could demand; we had treated with her not as with an enemy but as with a friend and confederate in the war; we had offered to her the restitution of all her colonies, we were forward to reestablish her in the full possession of her former territory and power, formidable, too formidable, as experience had already proved them to our own tranquillity and to the independence of Europe. Notwithstanding all that we had suffered from her injustice, and all that we might still fear from her ambition, we had laboured to secure

to her the same rank among the nations, the same authority and weight which she before possessed in the well-balanced system of European power. This was the general sentiment, the universal desire of our country, no longer the enemy but the friend and well wisher of France. What an insult would it have been had she told us in return, Take back your proffers ; your sacrifices of present advantage we reject, your pledges of future friendship we disdain, rapine and murder are the concessions we require at your hands, by your own guilt only can our hostility be appeased, no peace offering is acceptable to us unless it be steeped in the blood of our fellow creatures ! It cannot be. This desperate and overbearing insolence, this insatiate thirst for war, this longing appetite and craving for blood might characterize the former tyrant of France : they are directly opposed to the virtues of her present sovereign. Still less can we believe that so monstrous a declaration could be extorted from him by the opinion of his people. Did they still sigh for war ? Was this an object for which in the hour of defeat and danger, they could be reconciled to the continuance of their sufferings ? What consolation would the slavery of their fellow creatures offer to them for a conscription desolating their own families ? What would it profit them to purchase by the destruction of France the right of ravaging Africa ?

But suppose them still unsatiated with misery. Grant that they wished once more to challenge the world to arms for the maintenance of wrong, that they panted to range themselves under this bloody standard. How was the contest to be supported? By the strength of France? It had in that very moment been tried in the balance and found wanting. Would the justice of this cause, would its humanity entitle it to the favour of other powers, or call down protection from above? I have heard of many bad reasons for undertaking and continuing war. Governments have in every age been too prone to this terrible extremity; too easily have all nations been inflamed to mutual slaughter by the evil passions of their rulers. But a war for continuing the Slave Trade! A resort to arms for permission to violate the principles of universal justice! An appeal to Heaven for its blessing on the righteous cause of robbery and murder! Is this what our government have feared? On this ground have they distrusted the long tried fortitude and magnanimity of their country? To this danger have they surrendered up our principles and honour; to fly from this have we incurred the disgrace not only of sanctioning the most flagitious wickedness but of appearing to sanction it for gain?

For it is useless to dissemble it. Such must inevitably be the judgment of other nations on

this treaty. It has secured to our country commercial profits, and colonial acquisitions at the expence of France; inconsiderable in value, I admit it, but still sufficient to brand our national character with the dishonour of interested guilt. To France the renewal of the Slave Trade is conceded, into her hands we deliver up the wretched inhabitants of Africa, and from her in return we receive back these advantages: the contract is reciprocal, the transactions simultaneous; included in the same treaty, never will they be separated in the opinion of mankind.

In vain then is the alternative of war suggested to us. In vain are we asked whether the renewal of hostilities would not have been too dear a price for our innocence and honour. I hope no member of this assembly so considers it. But never was this negotiation brought to any such issue. Before the question of war could arise the question of acquisition must be disposed of. We have consented to revive and guarantee the Slave Trade, not because we feared war, but because we thirsted for more extended possessions. By the sacrifice of these we might have preserved both peace and innocence. Such will be the just judgment both of the present time and of posterity; the opinion of impartial men in all ages. Had you renounced, they will tell us, your desire of aggrandizement,

had you subdued your appetite for power, you might have maintained the glory of uncontaminated virtue. If you could no otherwise refuse yourselves to a dishonourable contract for guilt, you might have proffered in exchange for it the abandonment of these acquisitions; an exchange which France most certainly would gladly have accepted. Till that offer shall have been made and refused, whatever present, whatever future advantages you hope for from this treaty must be considered as the price of blood. It is not lawful to put them into the account of your power, to register them among the honourable possessions of your empire, acquired by a just title, and maintained by virtuous exertions.

Yet though we have signed and sealed with France this covenant for slavery, though we have trafficked and bargained with her for profit in blood, we shall still be told that we have made to her no new concession. The whole extent of our grant it will be said was already within her power. Without our intervention she might carry on the Slave Trade, without our sanction desolate the nations of Africa. If it was so, why then did she extort, why did we concede this article? A gratuitous humiliation, dishonourable to us, unprofitable to herself. But let us examine the foundation of this assertion. It rests

exclusively on the present situation of St. Domingo. Her colonies in the leeward islands, her possessions in South America, her African settlements were confessedly in the hands of the allies. But in St. Domingo, we are told, she might reestablish the Slave Trade; there she might carry it on to an extent of which no human misery hitherto known upon the Earth can afford the faintest image. There she might revel in blood, feast on the contemplation of what this wickedness has already produced, and labour undisturbed to perpetuate the same horrors for all succeeding generations.

And were it so, yet could this be our justification? Would her crime sanctify ours? Too often already has this wretched plea been urged in vindication of the Slave Trade. I trusted it had been for ever silenced by the victorious eloquence of virtue. Never will the example of blood palliate the guilt of blood. We are not permitted to plunder the traveller lest he should fall into the hands of robbers, or to anticipate with our own daggers the murderous purpose of his assassin.

But in truth, my lords, the case of St. Domingo, so far from lessening, aggravates in the highest degree the wickedness of this stipulation. If there be within the whole circle and range of evil created by the revival of the Slave

Trade of France one object more revolting, one danger more terrible than the rest, we shall find them in that very quarter where the advocates of this article look for its apology. God forbid that the project should really be entertained of repeopling that colony with slaves! The bare suspicion, the very possibility of such a purpose, so far from teaching us to view with indifference the act we have committed, must strike more terror and remorse into our minds than all that mass of other wickedness which our connivance in these crimes is about to reproduce. Cold indeed must be the sensations of that man, hard and insensible his heart, formed in no common mould, tempered with no human qualities, who can look back with any other feelings upon the history of St. Domingo; who can recollect the past consequences of such an attempt, and calmly reflect upon the inevitable effects of its renewal. But what Englishman with such a picture before his eyes can see without shuddering that the revival of the French Slave Trade, the source and fountain of all this misery, is sanctioned by the recognition of his own country, authorized by her public faith, and can be accomplished only by her deliberate intervention and voluntary aid?

On this part of my subject I forbear to enlarge. Much more I should have said, in jus-

tice to my own feelings, much more in justice to the cause which I have undertaken, but I am restrained by considerations which I am sure your lordships will approve. I cannot believe that any such sanguinary purpose has ever once entered into the contemplation of the present sovereign of France. His humanity, his wisdom must forbid it. By a dreadful lesson has that country learnt what torrents of African, what torrents of European blood must be shed in such an attempt, through what a scene of carnage and desolation it must be pursued, what wickedness beyond all power of language is inseparably attendant on every stage of its progress, from its first dreadful conception to the horrid but unattainable hope of its final execution. These considerations, if the matter were a subject of British deliberation, I should never cease to urge upon the legislature of my country. My tongue must fail me, my hand forget its powers, sense and life itself must be extinguished before I could cease to call down the indignation of mankind, to invoke the just judgments of Heaven, on the authors of so flagitious an enterprise.

But to whatever quarter it may be intended to carry the unhappy victims of the Slave Trade, whatever be the destined scene of their unceasing and hopeless misery, let it be remembered

that from Africa they will be torn: From that continent whose shores and commerce we have restored to France for the avowed and stipulated purpose of this cruelty. Nearly a thousand miles of that coast had already been cleared of the Slave Trade; and all the adjacent countries rescued from its destructive influence. By us this work had been atchieved. We had encouraged the nations of that extensive district to look with confidence to us for the continuance of these blessings. We have now surrendered them up again unprotected and defenceless, without one thought of provident kindness, without one stipulation of mitigating mercy. We have covenanted that France may replunge their country into barbarism, may pollute it with fresh crimes and desolate it with fresh wars. We have permitted, we alone have enabled her to carry away its inhabitants into perpetual slavery. This act is ours. We cannot discharge ourselves from it.

It is painful to dwell upon these topics; I will no longer urge them. Your lordships feel them deeply; and if you hesitate to adopt the motion which I shall this day propose to you, it is from no approbation of this article—God forbid you should approve it—but from the hope that at the ensuing congress all its mischiefs may yet be repaired. I trust it will be so,

Experience has taught us in this cause never to despair. We have indeed neglected our most favourable opportunity; we have relinquished a position of unassailable advantage. Unfortunate has been our departure from that course where success was infallible; that course which parliament itself had unanimously advised. Wisely had your lordships recommended that the abolition of the Slave Trade should be proclaimed at Paris by the united voice of this country and her allies, promulgated in the hour of victory as a principle of public law, and basis of future peace, and incorporated as an indefeasible condition in the great charter of national independence. What facilities, what advantages would not have attended that proposal? What splendour would not the triumph of Europe have derived from a decree which gave life and liberty to Africa? With what submissive reverence would not the nations have then received this law of justice, this sacred covenant of mercy at the hands of those mighty sovereigns, clothed in that hour with all the power of conquerors, all the authority of legislators, and all the influence of benefactors?

But it is past; that fortunate moment is for ever past. And very different must now again be the situation of this great cause. It must be treated and bargained for by contract, and agreement; obtained by solicitation, or purchased by

sacrifice. It is thrown once more exclusively upon Great Britain. She must negotiate for it with those very powers who have hitherto most pertinaciously resisted it, either from mistaken interest or inveterate prejudice. We must supplicate from France the renunciation of this sanguinary traffic, after having ourselves guaranteed to her its continuance; we must solicit the same concession from Spain and Portugal, who refused it, as we are told, to the earnest entreaties of our government, at a time when our flag alone protected their slave ships, and our arms defended their ports. All this we must accomplish under circumstances of increased and increasing difficulty. The nations will be no longer joined in one common interest, no longer awed by the deep impressions of danger hardly yet escaped, of deliverance still imperfectly atchieved: our own influence will have been lessened, and the union of our allies enfeebled; the countries of the Peninsula will have ceased to depend on Great Britain for their safety, the territory of France will have been evacuated by the powers of the continent, and we shall ourselves have ceded back to her those conquests which while they remained in our possession afforded to us sure pledges for the attainment of our object and certain means of enforcing its execution.

Yet, I repeat it, let us not despair. The best

of all resources still remains to us, in the firmness and spirit of our countrymen; in their determination and in ours never to submit to this opprobrious wrong. Of ultimate success we can no longer doubt. The indifference, the silence of this house, had it been possible that you could be indifferent or silent in such a crisis, might indeed have been fatal to Africa. The acquiescence of our country in this dishonourable stipulation must have replunged that continent into irretrievable misery and ruin. But the declared and unshaken resolution of the British parliament will henceforth command attention to these sacred interests; the unanimous determination of the British people, that burst of virtuous feeling which has so nobly asserted this great cause, and vindicated to all posterity our national character, are the certain harbingers of victory and triumph.

What part then in such a moment best becomes this house? What share is it fitting that your lordships should take in the exertions which must still be made, in the glory which still awaits your country? It is for you to lead, not to follow your fellow subjects in the paths of virtue and honour. It is in your power to give peace and security to millions. Cast not this duty on others. Ascertain by the investigation of past failure the best means of present ex-

ertion. Redeem by your own wisdom the errors of your government. Point out to them once more the way to that final triumph which a compliance with your injunctions would already have atchieved, and which, under every disappointment, is still confidently expected from the wisdom and energy of a British legislature, and from the constancy of a virtuous people.

Awful indeed is the decision to which we are thus called. On the resolutions which we are now to take, depend the innocence and honour of our own country, the security of millions, the happiness of many generations, the peace and civilization of a whole continent. How shall these objects be best attained? What present, what final determination of this house will most effectually contribute to accomplish for mankind a blessing whose magnitude no thought can grasp, whose value no imagination can exaggerate? It is a fearful thing for any individual to interpose advice where the consequences of error are so extensive, its effects so fatal. And yet I feel that the duty of this day will have been imperfectly discharged if I am silent on this question.

The opinion which I shall humbly offer to you rests indeed on no doubtful grounds. It is founded alike in the circumstances and in the

character of our cause. Other measures may possibly prove effectual, the success of this would be certain. You have already abolished the Slave Trade in the French settlements and colonies. You still possess the means of preventing its revival. Never let them be relinquished until that object be secured. 'This is your sacred duty. If that duty admits of modification and compromise, refer it to negotiation. If you desire only to narrow the limits or to shorten the stipulated duration of that wickedness for which we have now covenanted with France, if you seek from other powers some pretended mitigation only of this guilt, some illusory hope of its future abolition in return for your sanction and warrant of its present continuance, such endeavours may not improperly be intermixed with the details of territorial and commercial adjustment. But if you reprobate this stipulation as a sacrifice not of profit but of principle, if you abhor the crime which it would bind you to perpetrate, and are fully purposed that no hope, no fear shall ever make you instrumental in it even for the shortest period, in that case justice and wisdom require, your interest and your dignity demand that you should speak and act with the decision of men conscious of right. Suspend at once the execution of

this unhallowed article. Withhold the restitution of your conquests. Persevere in that decision, unseduced by promise, unterrified by menace, until you have irrevocably established the abolition of the Slave Trade.

Great is the importance to every country, inestimable is the value to Great Britain of maintaining inviolate its public faith. But no contract is binding whose performance is unlawful; no treaty valid which stipulates for crime. To fulfil such engagements is in itself a disregard and breach of prior and stronger obligations. This is the concurrent declaration of every moralist; the judgment of reason, the unerring sentence of religion. In doubtful cases only can its application be disputed; how irresistible is its force where our covenant itself contains an unblushing avowal of its own iniquity!

Nor will your lordships by such a resolution over-step the limits of parliamentary duty. Lawful treaties sanctioned by the seal of the sovereign are binding no doubt on the public faith. No man questions it. But against a stipulation which implicates our country in the guilt of blood has parliament no power to interpose? Where can the British nation look in such a case but to that authority on which

our government itself is at this very hour established? to that authority which speaks in the name and acts for the protection of all the estates of the people of this realm?

I need not remind you of former instances of such interposition on much weaker grounds. I need not in speaking to such an assembly as this argue those well understood and admitted principles which except extreme cases from the general course and practice of all civil institutions. Under that description, I say it with reluctance, under that description falls the question which we are now considering. This is an extreme case; a case where the prior and paramount laws of universal and eternal justice must of necessity supersede the local and partial obligations of any separate community. On every ground this contract is void. We cannot covenant for crime; we cannot barter away the rights of others; the lives and liberties of the nations of Africa have not been placed by our Creator at the disposal of France and England.

But when I thus impeach the validity of this stipulation and deny its binding force, let it be distinctly understood that my opinion is grounded not on its impolicy but on its iniquity. We are compelled to refuse ourselves to its execu-

tion, not because it must prejudice our interests, but because it would make us accomplices in guilt.

The inexpediency of this engagement I have purposely forborne to argue. It has not the weight of a feather in the balance, when compared with those topics which I have this day submitted to your feelings. I could not bring myself to dwell on such considerations when the revival of the Slave Trade was in question. Nor could it indeed have been necessary to urge them. They are obvious to all your lordships. You are well apprized what ruinous speculations this revival of the Slave Trade will infallibly produce in the French islands ; you know by what inevitable consequence these must expose your own planters to an unequal and uncommercial competition. You need not be reminded that the dangers of internal and domestic ruin from the continual importation of fresh slaves, that the example and the influence of such scenes as St. Domingo has exhibited, must by a dreadful but infallible necessity extend themselves to your own colonies. You are fully sensible also of all the embarrassments with which this stipulation will clog the execution of your own laws. How difficult it will be to prevent the application of British

capital to this wickedness when authorized by France. How large a portion of this trade will really be carried on in her name by your own subjects ; how much of it will be diverted to the supply of your own colonies, under a pretended destination to those with which they are so closely intermixed in the West Indian seas. Nor can you disguise from yourselves or from the world what a mockery it would be to talk of abolishing the Slave Trade in the settlements of Holland or of Portugal if you yourselves shall have reestablished it in French Guiana.

To these familiar and obvious considerations your own foresight will already have superadded the painful reflection of the precariousness of peace itself under the stipulations of this article ; your wisdom will have anticipated the mutual irritation, the perpetual debate and menace, the final and not remote hostility which must so certainly result from these evasions of laws whose violation we can never disregard, and from the measures of rigorous though ineffectual precaution which must of necessity be opposed to such a danger.

These mischiefs you justly think your government should have weighed, your negotiators have prevented in the arrangement of this pacification. No principle is better established in

the law of nations than that which entitled you, when you restored to France her colonies, to stipulate that her possession of them should be so regulated, as not to become from any intermediate change of circumstances more prejudicial to your interests than it was before the war.

But never let us forget that these motives, though of irresistible force against concluding such a treaty, afford no ground whatever for annulling it. That determination can rest on one foundation only, the foundation of eternal justice; that act can be supported only by the deliberate conviction that to fulfil this engagement would be to plunge your country into the infamy and guilt of rapine and murder: that this stipulation binds you not merely to permit, to countenance, to sanction those crimes, but to make yourselves the accomplices and instruments of their perpetration. This it is which has filled your people with horror. They have too plainly seen that by the hands of Great Britain these victims are delivered up to slaughter. They shudder to reflect that when inquisition shall be made for innocent blood it is not from France only that the lives of millions will be required. To offer an asylum to a fugitive in peril of death is

in my own choice. I may grant, I may refuse it. But if when invited and protected in my house I thrust him forth upon the daggers of his assassins, knowing and seeing that they are waiting at my door resolved and armed for his destruction, if I make myself a party to their bloody denunciations, if I bargain and contract for my own profit to connive at, to abet, and even to aid their cruelty, am I innocent of the moral guilt, am I innocent even of the legal crime of his murder? There is no tribunal, there is no law on Earth that would not exact my life in just retribution for his. How vain then is the hope, how impious the belief that those pretences which are nugatory even in the sight of man will avail us to evade the unerring justice of Heaven, or that the deformity of our own guilt can ever be cloaked by any wickedness of others from the eyes of an all-seeing Providence!

And here my lords I close my statement. To this reflection what can be added? And yet I would it were in my power before I finally submit this great cause to your decision, to exhibit to you not the iniquity only, the blood-stained iniquity of this stipulation, (that I fear I have too clearly shewn,) but also the full extent of its dreadful and heart-rending con-

sequences. But I know myself unequal to the task. I have no powers of language to detail to you this misery. I cannot paint to you in the dark and terrific colouring of truth the varied and intolerable woes which the Slave Trade inflicts upon its wretched victims; or those unmeasurable calamities with which it desolates the whole continent of Africa. Would to God that I could place them even in their faintest image before your eyes! That you could see and judge the sufferings of any one only among those millions of your fellow creatures in whose behalf I plead! That you could witness the whole course and progress of his misery! The anguish with which he views those fetters which first mark him as the property of a master; the despair with which he enters that ship which is to carry him away a desolate and hopeless captive to an unknown country. That ship, that scene of unimagined miseries so much more terrible in their reality than all that even the terror of that dreadful moment can teach him to anticipate! That ship, which if he unhappily survives the horrors of its pestilential and murderous hold must finally deliver him up to the last extremity of human evil, to a condition of unceasing and unrewarded toil, of perpetual and unmitigated slavery, from which no

hope remains, no refuge is left but in the grave. Would to God that you could see the last look he casts, hear the last despairing accents he addresses to his native land! That you could witness the feelings with which he quits that country the scene of all his joys, the nurse of all his affections; the source of local habits dear to all, but ever dearest to the untutored mind; of social ties rivetted by nature into the heart of man, of all the dearest relations, all the tenderest charities of human life! That you could also view the sufferings which through him are inflicted on those from whom he is torn; on the despairing friend, on the childless parent, the widowed wife, and the orphan children! That you could then follow him through all the stages of his merciless captivity! That you could see the inmost recesses of a slave ship! That you could even imagine to yourselves the horrors of a slave-market! That you could count the groans, that you could estimate the silent miseries of the plantation slave! His ceaseless labour, his unprotected sufferings, his tortured life, his premature and anticipated death!

From these scenes I would conduct you if it were in my power to the wider and still more dreadful prospect of the carnage and devastation of Africa. I would exhibit to you those false

accusations, those imaginary crimes, that systematic injustice, perfidy, and violence which in those unhappy countries where the Slave Trade is established form the only sources of commercial speculation. I would shew you the lure of European wealth tempting the uninstructed savage to the commission of every crime: the superiority of European power, and European knowledge, employed not to diffuse the doctrines of moral truth, or to open to those countries the purer light of revelation, but to prolong and to extend among them every delusion, wickedness, and misery with which ignorance and superstition afflict mankind. I would place if it were possible before you that state of universal war which the Slave Trade produces and perpetuates; the wretchedness of nations, the desolation of provinces, the prolonged and hopeless barbarism of a whole quarter of the globe!—That internal and domestic hostility in comparison with which war itself, public war in its most fearful form, is a happiness and blessing to mankind!—That unexampled condition of human misery in which no individual feels his freedom or his life secure even for an hour against lawless strength or insidious machination!—That dissolution of all society in which village is armed against village, and family

against family, that worse than savage ferocity in which the hand of every man is against his neighbour!

The long agitation of these questions has I fear too much accustomed our ears, too much familiarized our imaginations with these enormities. How else could we support even for an instant the recollection that by our intervention they are again to be inflicted upon these wretched nations? That every part of Africa must again from our act see her villages broken up, her towns sacked, her countries desolated; again see every principle violated, every tie broken, every feeling outraged which nature has interwoven into the heart of man. The sovereign delivering over his subjects into foreign captivity, the master setting a price on the life of his domestic, the friend armed against his friend, the brother ensnaring the liberty of his brother, the father trafficking in the blood of his children, the husband selling into slavery the partner of his bed! My lords, if there be any misery in private life which can move compassion, if there be any public oppression and tyranny which we abhor, if there be any sentiments degrading to man, any crimes directly subversive of all those principles in which it has pleased our Creator to constitute the happiness of his creatures, that misery is enhanced, that tyranny aggravated,

that degradation is rendered more complete, those crimes more horrible, by the wickedness which this stipulation has covenanted to revive. It was the boast and exultation of our country that she had led the way, however late, to the abolition of this guilt, in which she had so deeply shared. She declared to Africa that she repented her of the evil she had inflicted. And she pledged herself in atonement for it, not to unavailing sorrow and remorse, but to unceasing efforts for banishing from the Earth for ever a wickedness more horrible, a more aggravated misery than has in any other shape ever visited any portion of the human race. For myself I can truly say, and such I am confident were the impressions of thousands, I never have, I never can experience in any moment of my life sensations of joy, emotions of gratitude to Heaven, at all comparable with those which were excited in my breast when we succeeded in effecting the abolition of the British Slave Trade. Let not, once more I supplicate you, let not despair and shame be the successors of this transport! Let not all this misery be revived! Let not our own act obscure the lustre of our glory! Let the sons of Africa now and for ever bless instead of cursing the name of Englishmen.

My lords, I move you that an humble address be presented to his royal highness the prince

regent, praying that he will be graciously pleased to direct that there be laid before this house copies of such representations as have been made by his majesty's ministers in the late negotiations for peace, in consequence of the unanimous address of this house for the immediate and total abolition of the Slave Trade, together with the answers returned thereto; and also extracts from such parts of the dispatches of his majesty's ministers as relate to the same subject.

THE END.

regent, praying that he will be graciously pleased to direct that there be laid before this House copies of such representations as have been made by His Majesty's ministers in the late negotiations for peace, in consequence of the unanimous address of this House for the immediate and total abolition of the Slave Trade, together with the answers returned thereto; and also extracts from such parts of the dispatches of His Majesty's ministers as relate to the same subject.

NOTES



ESB103

Bibl. Mont. 4

Revue de la Bible et de l'histoire des religions / par J.
B. L. 1947

Note:

Grenville, William W.

Substance of the speech of the right honourable Lord Grenville, in the House of Lords, on monday, june 27, 1814, in moving for certain papers relative to the revival of the slave trade

London 1814

Bibl.Mont. 4694#Beibd.2

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10980024-3